

Town of Exeter  
TREE COMMITTEE  
**DRAFT** MINUTES FOR 1/14/2025

**I. PRELIMINARIES:**

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Eileen Flockhart (Chairwoman), Steve Jones, Sally Oxnard, Sara Sankowich, Sally Ward, Gwen English

STAFF PRESENT: Kristen Murphy, Jay Perkins, Kirk Scamman

**II. CALL TO ORDER:** Eileen called the meeting to order at 8:30AM

**III. OLD BUSINESS:**

Minutes from November 12, 2024 were approved with minor edits.  
(Motion to approve by Sally Oxnard, seconded by Gwen English)

**IV. NEW BUSINESS:**

For the record, Sara Sankowich wanted to add that Unitil has a history of tree management intended to reduce risk to Unitil lines while keeping adjacent trees. She also notes that the use of tree growth chemicals requires planning and action before trees decline into actionable at-risk status. Sara also agrees that replacement trees should be planted when large trees have been downed or significantly pruned in error “as long as the Town can find appropriate locations for the trees.”

Tree City and Growth Award applications are done and have been submitted with Kristen’s help. Kirk says that we can *order* a new flag every year on Earth Day so we know that we’d always have one. (This would be in addition to one we receive every year). These flags wear out quickly so it’s good to have a spare on hand.

Eileen would like to get kids involved in the Tree Inventory and feels that much of this would come naturally to them since they are already tech saavy! A discussion ensued about the inventory system which was set up and orchestrated by RPC. We’ve talked about transferring this to the Town but nothing has happened yet. Heather, the Town’s GIS person, would be capable of managing it but Kristen would first need to have a discussion with Rob at RPC about migrating this to the Town.

Our priority is getting data on the street trees. We can look into getting a table at Town Meeting and gaining exposure for this project there. (The deliberative session is February 1, and we vote on March 11, 2025). Ideally we would have someone at the table who has done the inventory.

Kristen is also happy to host a training session again.

Kristen did reach out to the owners of the Citizen Bank building and they gave us permission to take up the bricks around the street tree and do the work necessary to save that tree.

\$20,000.00 in funds are available for pruning and cutting trees. Kirk explained that it costs \$1,800 per day for a bucket truck, so these funds are eaten up quickly. We do have the \$5,000 available for purchasing trees. Note: DPW does not charge for planting new trees. Also, new money becomes available after elections, around April 5.

Sally Oxnard showed the group a flyer titled *Groundwork Rhode Island* put out by a group in Rhode Island who aim to plant in low income areas with little vegetation. It also speaks about micro forests (dense plantings in small areas) per the Miyawaki method for creating micro forests. Sara is familiar with a UNH student who just studied this and she (Sara) will get more information on this for us.

Kirk confirmed that we still need to move the elms at the Library and he aims to get this done at the end of March. It will be the first project for this spring. There is an issue with an 8" gas line in front of Access Sports where we had hoped to plant those elms. We don't want to be within 10' of this gas line so we'll have to re-think plantings there. 10 Hampton Road and 4 Hampton Road are both Town properties so perhaps we can plant there instead. He will look into options. (We will move the elms before planting dogwood at the Library)

Kirk and Jay noted that the Scenic Road designation signs are up! Kristen will work on taking pictures and posting information about the location of scenic roads as an F.Y.I. on the Con Com website.

Jay reported that the water tank will be ready in the spring. Gwen proposed that we put something on the tank informing the public of its use, and that it contains water not chemicals. Sara offered "Watering Our Trees for a Healthier Tomorrow" or "Exeter Loves its Trees"! Sara also mentioned Arbor Day's Education and Tree Research Endowment Fund. She and Steve will look into this.

2025 Priorities:

Kristen would like to have a majority of our street trees inventoried this year. We need to get away from reactive planning and be prepared for budgeting and financial planning. This would also help with priority planting.

Sara thinks a Tree Stewards Program would be great. This gives people a title and a role and motivation to care for our trees! We're reminded that a gentleman named Bob Walsh is interested in volunteering (tree inventory etc.) and we should approach SST and the Exeter High School Environmental club. Gwen will reach out to Anne DeMarco at SST and Sally and Steve will contact John Brough Jr. at EHS. Perhaps we can focus on the educational value of studying and planning a micro forest!

It was suggested that we could get a sponsor or multiple sponsors for a micro forest project, and have signage indicating that "This Miyawki Forest is sponsored by (sponsor/sponsors)"

Eileen would be happy to do a presentation to the Conservation Commission, like we did for the Selectboard, to update them on our progress. Kristen will ask the ConCom members at an upcoming meeting.

Circling back to the tree inventory, Kristen added that anyone doing the inventory should attempt to start and end the inventory at known locations, such as street intersections.

Meeting concluded at 9:40AM

**Next meeting is scheduled for February 11, 2025.**  
(The March meeting is to be determined. Possibly March 11)

Minutes respectfully submitted by Gwen English on January 16, 2025